

Making Alliances to Shine for God 09-28-14

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Bible: Esther 4:1–16

Esther: Another Survivor Story

- A beautiful young Jewish girl
- Her parents had died and she was an exile living far from home
- Her cousin raised her. His name was Mordecai.
- King Xerxes, ruler of the country where Esther lived, kicked his wife out of the palace...and now he was looking for a new Queen. Mordecai encouraged Esther to go and see if she could become queen
- She was chosen. One day Mordecai overheard a plot to kill King Xerxes.

Esther Made Alliances / Gathered Support to Shine for God

Esther did not attempt to shine for God on her own. She used her alliances / the support of her people, to fast and pray. Here's the Bible reference:

“Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish” (Esther 4:15–16).

What do you think happened? God came through!

- The king (who had banished his former wife for disrespectful conduct) could have killed Esther for approached him without an invitation. But he didn't.
- The Jews were not killed.
- Unfortunately, Haman was executed (impaled on a stake)

Esther's Alliances Went Before God

- She didn't act alone
- She relied on others
- She found strength from these alliances

Bible Survivors who thrived through their Alliances:

- David had Jonathan (who helped him rise up above Saul's death threats)
- Paul had Barnabas, Silas, Timothy (supporter while on Missionary Journeys)
- Moses had his brother Aaron (he spoke for Moses!)
- Naomi had Ruth (she encouraged her to live again)
- A Paralyzed Man (Mark 2:1-12)
"Seeing how much faith **they had**, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, "My son, your sins are forgiven."... he said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, pick up your mat, and go home!" While they all watched, the man got up, picked up his mat, and hurried away."

Do you have others that will help you shine for God? Alliances who will:

- Bring you to Jesus (through prayer) when you are sick?
- **(others that will)** Go out of they're way for you?
- **(others that will)** Be willing to bear with your problems in life?
- Others who will encourage you to rise above whatever situation you are in?!
- **Bigger question:** are you being this kind of friend to others, willing to help **them** rise up & shine for God?

Don't let your fire die out!

Have you ever kindled a fire in a fireplace while watching TV? Ever sat around a Bonfire with your friends? Sure you have. A pastor made this observation one night:

"For a log to ignite and burn, it has to be in contact with other burning logs. A log that doesn't lean on another that is already afire will not blaze. Similarly, even logs that have been burning will grow cool and lose their glow if they are left alone and do not find the company of other pieces of wood."

That's Esther's survival plan. She couldn't survive alone. Esther called on her alliances (like-minded friends and family members) who would pray

for her and bring her need to God. This helped keep her flame alive so she could shine for God. We need to do this too.

How history has changed!

Gone are the 'good ole days' when everyone seemed to believe in God and cared for one another!

- Values have changed and keep on changing
- People are more self-centered than ever before
- We don't know our neighbors' names, we stay closer to home, we look out for #1: US!

Question is this: How open is my schedule to other Christians? To your friends and co-workers?

- In Acts 2, the description of the first-century church is one of interdependance (**They shared meals together; they supported each other with seasons of prayer; they confronted each other in love when issues arose**)
- The Bible challenges us to live in community like this with two words: "One Another" 59 times!
 - "Encourage one another daily"
 - "Speak to one another" with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs
 - "Build one another up"
 - "Love one another"
- In your alliances for Jesus, be willing to give as well as receive, and see what great things God will do!

This week will you:

- Welcome input from a Christian friend in your life? (like Mordecai)
- Will you humble yourself and ask others to pray for you?
- Will you offer to be the prayer support for a friend or family member?
- Will you consider that God may have you right where He want you to be *for such a time as this?*—
 - You came to our church to fill a needed role
 - You have a skill that can help the people you have met recently
 - The 'missing need' you notice is something dear to your heart
 - What is God calling you to do / get involved in / be for Him?

Esther didn't just get by—she thrived in life because of her connectedness to other believers. Will you get more connected this week with God's family?

Prayer:

“Lord Jesus, I live in a needy world. I believe you have put me where I am for a reason. May I shine like a star in the universe, holding out the word of life. Help me, like Esther, to discover friends who encourage me to thrive spiritually wherever I am and in turn, help me to be an encouragement to the people around me for You. Amen.”